

**Idaho Panhandle National Forest Avalanche Center**  
**Avalanche Advisory**

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This is John "Oly" Olson with the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Avalanche Center. Today is December 3, 2009. We will begin issuing our regular avalanche advisories for the Forest around mid-December, depending on the weather. This avalanche advisory will be for Friday 12/3/09 with an outlook for Saturday and Sunday. As the season progresses and we begin to accumulate snow, please send us your observations and tell us what type of conditions you're seeing. This forecast does not represent conditions in ski areas. Thanks to the Schweitzer and Silver Ski Patrols for their early season observations.

Winter started off with a flurry (ha, ha) with snow pack in the mountains up to 48" reported at elevation tapering off to nothing at about 3000'. The cold clear weather has now set in for maybe the next 10 days. Surface hoar conditions predominate now and it sounds like it will keep building. There was a report of a skier released slab in the Selkirk's. Jesse at Schweitzer found an easy shear down about 25 cm in a 165 cm pack. Dave at Silver found a crust over light snow about 10cm. down in a 120 cm pack. These weak layers could persist. Any new snow (a small chance this weekend) could bury the surface hoar. Basically avalanche conditions now are **MODERATE on lee slopes above 5500'** natural avalanches are unlikely and human caused avalanches are possible. **All other slopes are rated at LOW** Natural avalanches are very unlikely, *human triggered* avalanches are unlikely.

From the sounds of the weather it might be a good time to break out the ice skates. Remember that early season conditions exist with the usual pitfalls of rock, creeks and other hazards. I definitely will be using my rock skis. Snowmobilers have had a hard time with the discontinuous snow pack due to the big melt off last week.

Wind loaded snow could be unstable in steeper chutes and gullies or below ridgelines. There may not be enough snow to bury you but it could be enough to push you into some trees or rocks and bang you up. Don't start the season off with an injury.

The best educational deal in the area will be at Specialty Recreation on Kathleen in CDA, 12/17/09. There will be free hotdogs from 6:00 pm and an avalanche presentation from 7:00 to 8:00 pm. Stop by, see the new gear and get some knowledge to use it safely this winter!

The State of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with the IPNF-AC, is conducting (**Free**) avalanche workshops for snowmobilers this winter in Coeur d' Alene on January 8 and 9, Sandpoint February 12-13, and in Priest Lake March 5-6. More information is at the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department website at [www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov](http://www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov), or call Marc Hildesheim, North Region Trails Specialist, at (208) 769-1511.

The IPNF Avalanche Center in Sandpoint and Sandpoint Parks and Recreation is sponsoring free avalanche workshops for all snowgoers 12/9/09. "Decision Making in the Backcountry" workshops will be offered 1/6/10 and 2/10/10. These are offered at the old Federal Building in Sandpoint and are ***Free to the public***. For class schedules in the Silver Valley contact Dan Frigard at 752-5130. In Avery contact Ed Odegaard at 245-6209.

If you have a group or club that is interested in more education on avalanche safety we will be available for free avalanche awareness classes beginning in December, so feel free to give us a call. As usual we would appreciate hearing from anyone who happens to observe any recent avalanche activity while out in the backcountry or just wants to let us know what is going on in their area.

***HAVE FUN AND BE CAREFUL!***